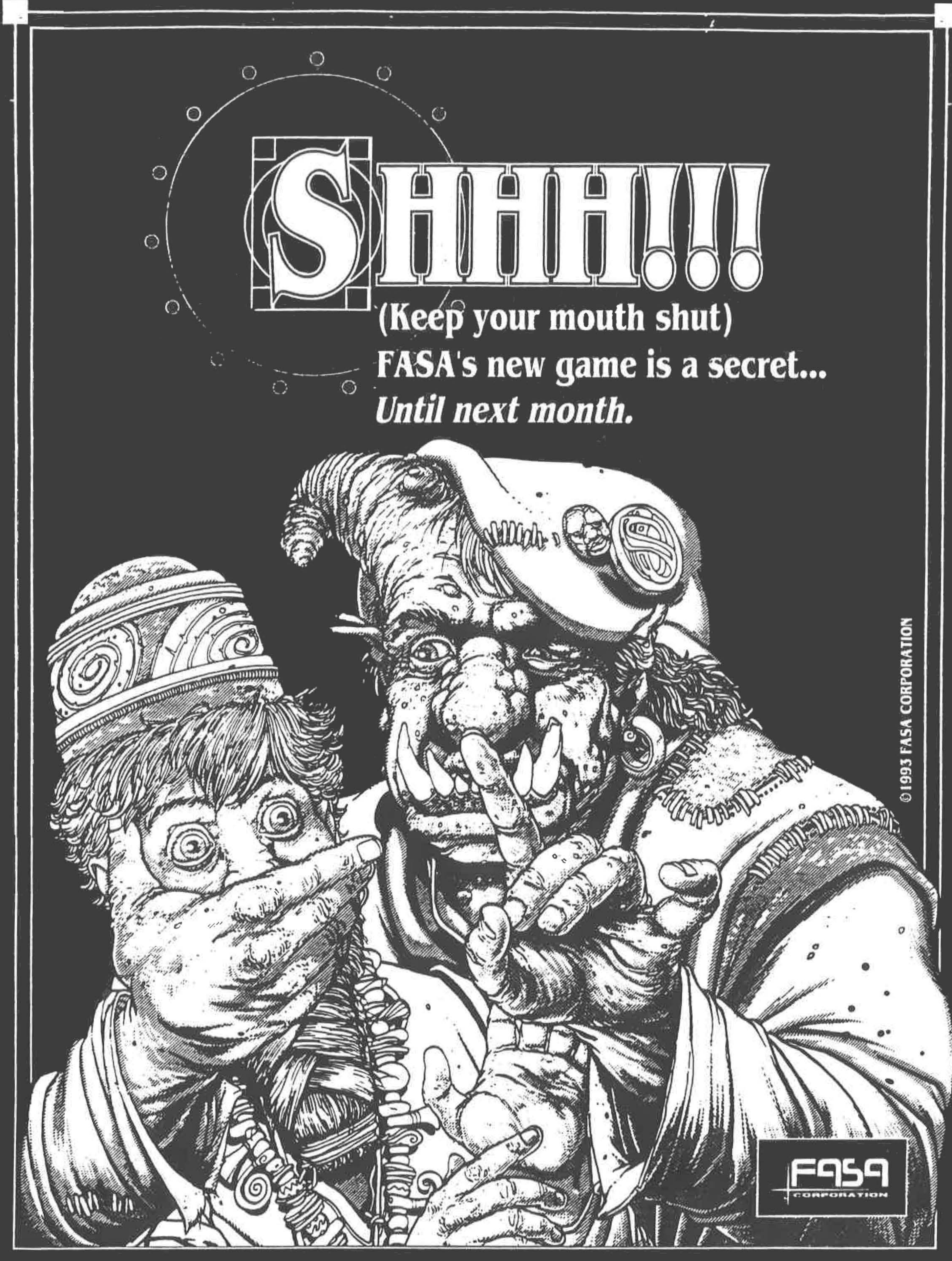

SHHH!!!
(Keep your mouth shut)
FASA's new game is a secret...
Until next month.
©1993 FASA CORPORATION
FASA CORPORATION

Flyer plan:
All flyers released through dist. chain, comic market, GAMA mailing

We are exploring different types of paper & printing methods for the flyers

Flyer 1
Ship in late April *TEXT IN LAYOUT*
- ED flyer #1 -
- 8 page flyer that details 2 characters
- includes stats
- give feel
- lots of art
- contains a page of info on upcoming product
- *TO KAREN (for film) March 8*

Flyer 2
Ship Mid-Late May
- ED flyer #2 -
- 8 page flyer that gives 2 more character and more of the universe
- similar to 1st flyer
- lots of art
- contains a page on upcoming product
- *TO KAREN (for film) April 8*

Flyer 3
Ship early July (but have available to take to Origins July 4th)
- ED # 3
- 16 page flyer w/ color cover & b/w interior
- gives enough info to actually play a small bit of the game
- gives an adventure
- contains a page on upcoming product
- *TO KAREN (for film) May 5*

Other promotional info:

1 page sell sheet (color 1 side, colored ink on the other side) selling ED to retailer. sent through the GAMA mailing this would be a first look at ED, before the flyers hit.

Ideas for GENCON:
- squishy head pins
- Temp tattoos

Earth Dawn Ad Schedule

March

Dragon: teaser ad b/w *"we've got a secret & we're not tellin'"*
due to Dragon Jan 15

March/April

White Wolf: *"Now is the time of Ledgends* (back cover)
due to WW Feb 1 (final film in my hands Jan 25)
local strip job, unless art can get it out this week

April

Dragon: *The time of darkness is over...* (one page-2 color)
" *Now is the time of Ledgend"* (4 color)
due to Dragon Feb. 15 (final film in my hands Feb.10)
To Karen: Jan 20th

May

Dragon: *"Now is the time of Courage"* (one page 4 color)
due to Dragon March 15 (in my hands by March 12)
To Karen: Feb 15

Capital City: (sales conf. issue)
specialized b/w ad geared towards the retailer
Due to Cap City: Feb 12 (in my hands Feb. 8th)

May/June

White Wolf: *"Now is the time of Courage..."*
due to WW April 1 (final film in my hands March 12)

July

Dragon: *The time is now...(final ED ad)*
due to Dragon May 14 (final film due to me May11)
Due Karen April 13

July/August

White Wolf: *The time is now...* (final ED ad)
due to White Wolf June 1 (final film to me May26)

August/September

Dragon: *ED Campaign Set*
due to Dragon June 15 (final film due to me June 11)
Due to Karen: May 17

Capital City: Specialized ad for ED geared towards retailer
due to Cap city: May 14 (final film-color)
Due to Karen: April 12

October

Comics Retailer: ED ad (color), probabl use the ad we designed for Cap City/Diamond
Due August 13 (in my hands August 9th)
To Karen: July 16

Challenge ads will also be placed, but they are on an odd schedule and I could not pinpoint specifics.

The Age Of EARTHDAWN



‘93 ED Product List

Earth Dawn rule book hardback 300pp.	$30-35.00	Late July/August
Earth Dawn GM Set box w/adventure, treasure cards, screen	20.00	Late July/August
Barsaive Box Set contents to be finalized	25.00	Mid-September

EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PAST IS WRONG!



The trolls raid the dwarfs,
the dwarfs dislike the elves,
the elves have no patience with the humans,
and the humans war with each other.

But everyone hates the Atlanteans.

Thousands of years ago there existed an age of magical thinking—

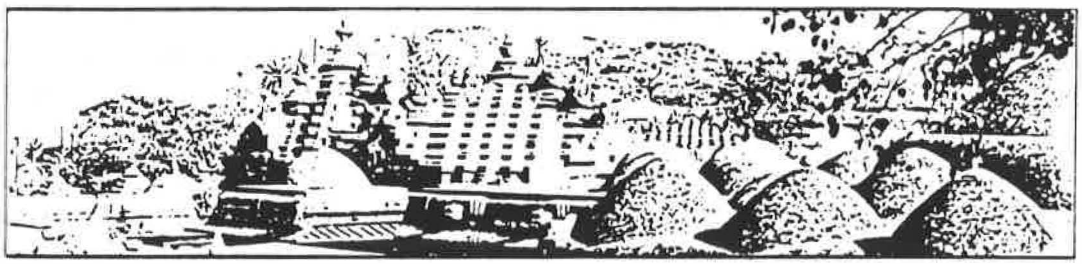
the age of the Earthdawn.

I tell you, it is all wondrous! The world is pocketed with the remains of ancient treasures. Not just coins and precious jewels, mind you—though those are indeed wonderful by themselves. No, it is the mana elements, the ancient tomes. There are books from even before the invasion. Pure texts of magic!

Why, of course I feel for those who died within those walls—I feel gratitude! I'm tremendously grateful that they gathered all those treasures and left them in one place.

—Firrus, Warlock Thief

You and your friends are heroes of the age, masters of this magic. Some of you are proficient in the martial schools of magic; at your will you can bend the tissues of your very flesh, forge it into a living armor able to withstand sword blows. Some of you have mastered control of natural forces, and can draw fire from the air and send it hurtling at your enemies. And others of you can control your body's interaction with the world; you can silence the sound of your footsteps and see in the darkness like some creature of the night. You are prized by your allies and feared by your enemies, for in the age of the Earthdawn there is no one who controls greater power than magic. . .



"Shall we fall prey to the same fate as those who have come before us? Shall we watch as all we have built with magic dissolves when the magic of the world once more vanishes? No! No, I say! For what is magic but an extension of our will? We are the masters of magic, and we are the masters of our destiny! We shall control the magic as we have controlled all else. We shall build a school—a school the like of which has never been seen. We shall draw students from all over the world, from all walks of life. And we shall apply ourselves to this task. We shall master the very essence of magic itself. We shall make the magic endure without end. There shall never come a twilight to this age of warlocks!"

—Herostius,
Founder of Atlantis

8389 B.C.

Magic returns to the world, continuing the rising and falling spiral it has followed for centuries.

6120 B.C.

Martrus, a warlock of great power and wisdom, discovers in an ancient tome that at the height of magic's power, creatures from another plane will descend upon the world. These beings are known as Horrors. Further research reveals that the creatures will devour everything in their path until they are sated.

6112 B.C.

Herostius, a pupil of Martrus, devotes himself to the goal of controlling the power of the world's magic. He reasons that if magic can be maintained at a level just below its highest level, the world will be safe from the Horrors. Herostius establishes a school in the Mediterranean Sea and sends out a call for the best of all warlocks to attend, teach, and learn.

6112-6008 B.C.

Over the next few decades the school attracts many talented warlocks. The mystical research progresses, but no one is certain if the work can be completed before the invasion of the Horrors. It is decided that the school will pursue a second goal of of building shelters against the Horrors.

6008 B.C.

The city of Atlantis is founded on an island in the Mediterranean, and will serve as a fortress against the Horrors. Warlocks make up one-half the city's population, making it the most powerful urban center in the world.

5983 B.C.

The elven kingdom of Shosara sends envoys to the Atlanteans, asking them to share the secrets for building shelters against the Horrors. The Atlanteans agree, and in return receive extremely favorable trade agreements. Countless communities around the Mediterranean follow suit and make similar agreements. The power of Atlantis grows.

5924 B.C.

Aristoph, ruler of Atlantis, creates the Atlantean Empire. A legion of warlocks is created to defend the territories within the lands of the Empire. The area around the Mediterranean enjoys an era of peace and prosperity .

5924-5854 B.C.

The magic of the world increases in power, and the pace of research in Atlantis increases.

Meanwhile, within the Atlantean Empire, dwarfs, elves, humans, trolls, and orks busy themselves building shelters against the Horrors. Some of these shelters are vast underground complexes hewn out of mountains, others are fantastic citadels covered with intricate mystical wards.

5854 B.C.

As the magic of the world nears its apex, Horrors begin slipping through from their plane to that of the earth.

In Atlantis, an adept named Nikodus discovers that the magic of earth cannot be controlled until the Atlanteans have gained more magical power. Thus, the world will have to wait out the invasion of the Horrors. Only during that time will enough magic exist to make Martrus' dream a reality.

L • I • N • E

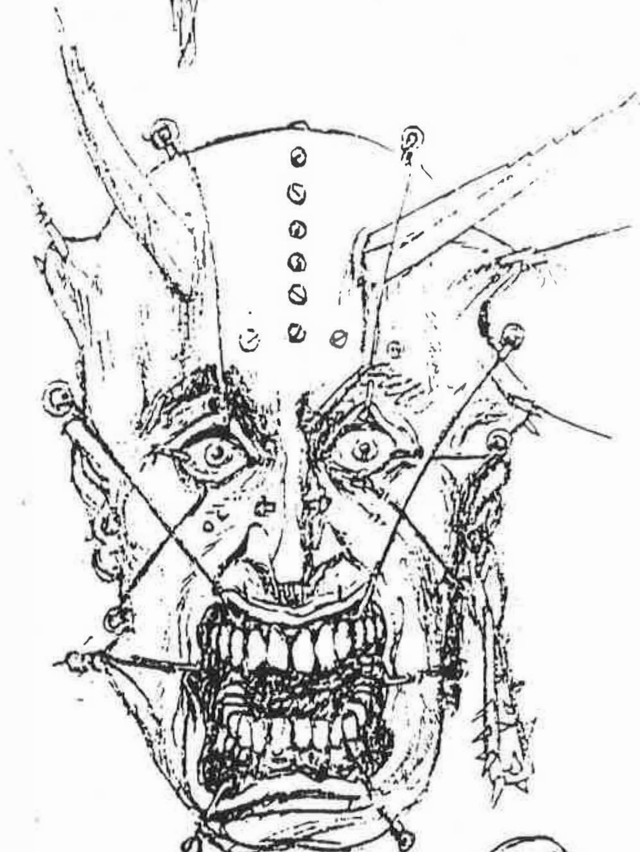


5854-5724 B.C.

The Horrors arrive and begin the devastation of the world. The people of earth close themselves up in their shelters and seal the doors. For the next two centuries they live within thick fortresses, sustaining themselves with magically grown food and supplies.

5717 B.C.

The warlocks of Atlantis complete their research and begin a powerful ritual spell that takes decades to cast. Because of the city's mastery of magic, the Atlantean defenses hold secure against the onslaught of the Horrors.



5717 B.C.

The Atlantean ritual is finished, and the Atlanteans take control of the level of magic in the world. They lower the power level, making the earth untenable for the Horrors. Most of the Horrors sense this happening and race for the portals that will let them return home.

When the power of magic drops to a point low enough to send most of the Horrors home, the Atlanteans freeze the world's magic level. Magic will no longer work in cycles. For the rest of eternity magic will be powerful on Earth.

5712 B.C.

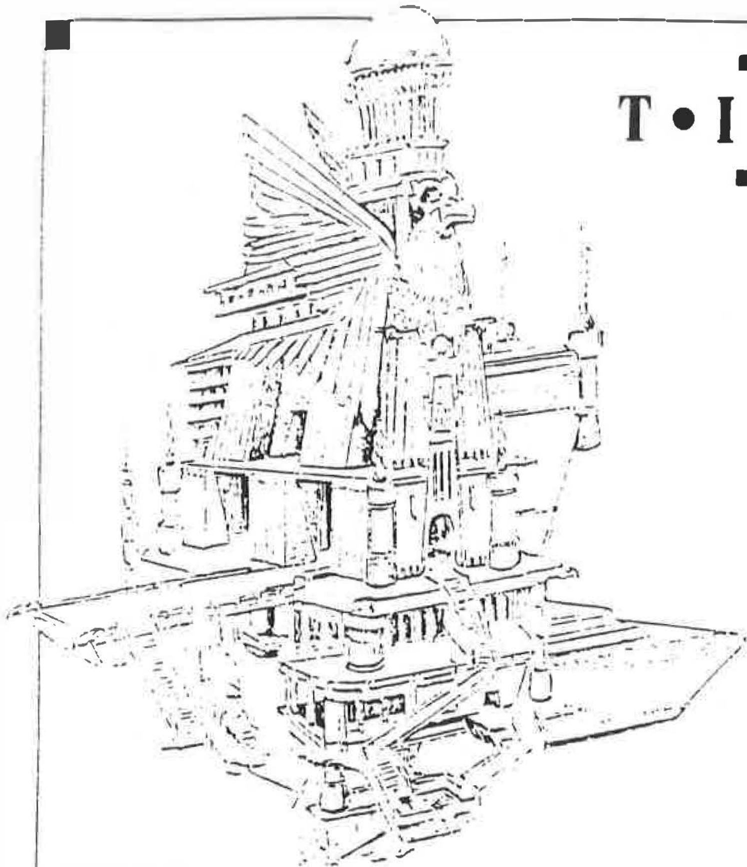
The invasion ended and the Horrors routed, the people of earth begin to open their doors and step out into the world.

5711 B.C.

The Great Sphinx is erected at Giza to stand as guardian; forever watching for the return of the Horrors.



T • I • M • E





5710 B.C.

The Atlanteans, confident now of their supreme destiny, begin to expand their influence once more. Their magnanimous point of view is gone, replaced by a harsh arrogance. They feel justified in enforcing slavery, and take what they want from their former subjects.

Though the Atlanteans are few in number, their military force is feared throughout the world. Transported by flying ships, a powerful army pushes the boundaries of the Empire back to the days before the invasion.

5704 B.C.

The earth, free of the ravenous Horrors, is able to restore itself to its former richness and beauty because of the prevailing high level of magic. Within weeks trees and other plants begin to take root and surviving animals are giving birth to prodigious litters.

5700 B.C.

In the region of Barsaive, the mighty dwarven kingdom of Throal opens its doors and farmers settle the lowlands around the Barsaive Mountains.

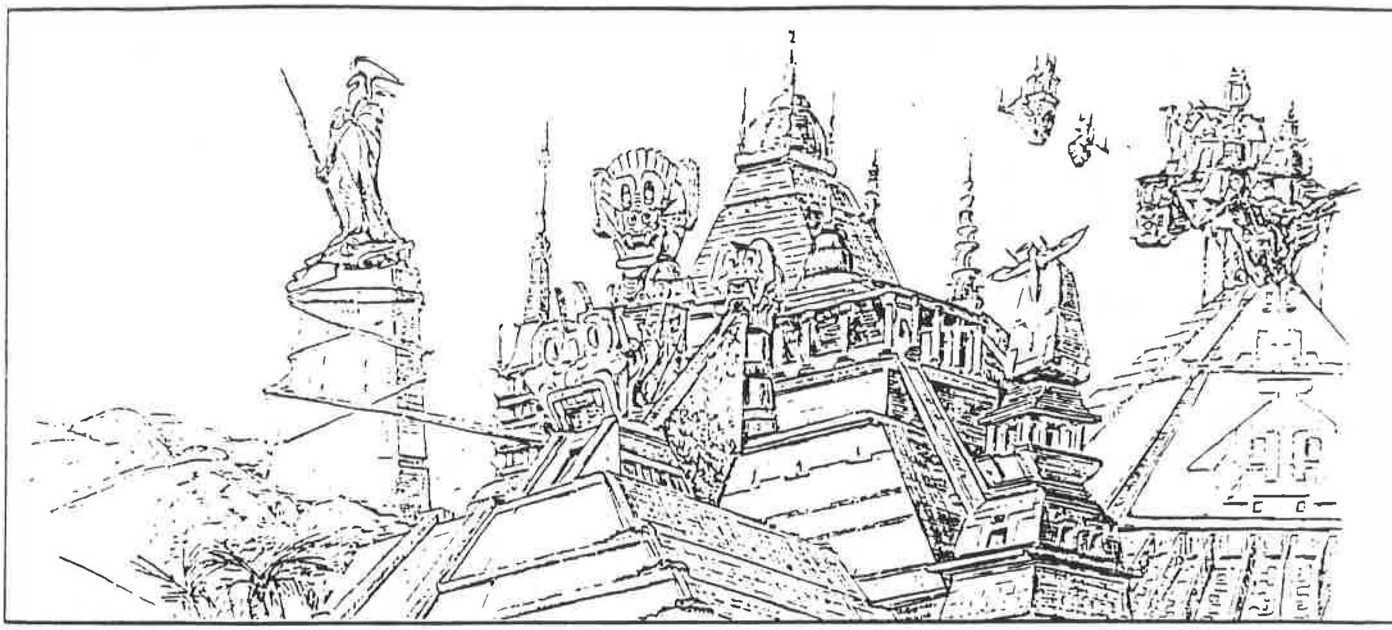
5699 B.C.

In Wyrm Wood, far to the north of Throal, the elves of Chairus reestablish their forest-based community. Envoys are sent out to make contact with other shelters.

5699-5655 B.C.

The human citadels of Corainth, Landis, and Terris tear down their walls and begin to rebuild their power bases. Many humans leave the citadels and strike out on their own, creating small towns and villages across the lands of Barsaive.

Smaller shelters, known as Kaers, follow suit. Some of the inhabitants refuse to leave the dark homes their ancestors lived and died in, while others welcome the chance for freedom.



5655 B.C.

Also in Barsaive, troll Viking clans come out of their high mountain retreat and begin to raid the settlements and towns of other peoples for food and supplies.

5653 B.C.

The Atlanteans arrive in Barsaive and establish an aerial mining outpost. They strike a deal with Jorit, the leader of a human town near the outpost, promising to leave his people in peace if they will provide slaves for the Atlantean airships.

5653-5648 B.C.

As explorers travel across Barsaive, they discover a dozen or more shelters whose doors are still sealed. In some cases the inhabitants are fearful of opening their doors because they are not aware that the invasion of Horrors has ended. The outside world gradually gets word to them, but it is only after a great deal of persuasion that these people will accept the fact that the threat is over.

Other shelters are found to be deserted of life. Adventurers who enter the silent shelters sometimes find corpses and sometimes no bodies at all. And sometimes they find the source of the carnage—a group of Horrors waiting within.

5648 B.C.

King Varlus of Throal hires ork cavalry to keep the farmlands safe from both Atlantean and troll Viking raiders.

5647 B.C.

Rumors of the ruins of a massive city called Parlainth ripple across Barsaive. The inhabitants fell to the Horrors and are long-dead. But it is full of dark buildings and deep tunnels in which the citizens of Parlainth hid their treasures. Explorers of the ruins say the lost city is inhabited by giant spiders and mindless hydra—as well as by Horrors who have yet to eat their fill.

Warlock Warrior

Your father realized that you possessed the gift of magic when you were very young, and so he brought you to a school of martial magic. The warlocks took you willingly, and on your first day they toured you through their domain. It was a large building made of white stone set deep in the heart of a wild green forest. Surrounding the building were enormous pillars, and within the structure was a large commons area. Inside you saw other students practicing combats, and noticed the mats set around the area where all of you would sleep.



The next day the warlocks put a sword in your hands, a small one, for you were only seven years old. They taught you how to use the blade, and you learned quickly. Over the next year the warlocks taught you how to let magic help you as a warrior. They taught you to know exactly where your opponent's blade would be within the next three seconds. They taught you to rebuild your flesh so that your body became as strong as wood, then as strong as bronze, and then as strong as stone. They showed you how to move quickly and with such grace that you could leap through the air and still make a successful strike.

You are eighteen now, and you have learned much. The masters of the school have told you that now you must go out into the world. They say that you have much more to learn, but it is not the kind of knowledge that can be taught in a school. . .

Troll Viking



Your people make their homes in the safety of mountain fastnesses. You are close to both the sky and rock, and have mastered the elemental magics of air and stone. The pride of your clan are the swift airships you use to raid those who live in the lowlands. It is not war, but survival. You take what you must, and live by a warrior code. If you can defeat the warriors of a village, their possessions are yours. If you are defeated, then yours is a warrior's death.

A year ago the Atlanteans arrived and established a mining outpost to draw air essence from the sky. They fly their barges up among the clouds and rip the air apart with mana blasts, creating rifts in the elemental planes.

The Atlanteans are slavers who kidnap people from the tribes of the lowlands to crew their barges. A month ago one of their ships attacked a ship of your clan, taking the entire crew into bondage. Now, whenever your people spot one of their ships, your warriors gather their strength and attack. Already you have been involved in two fierce battles with these intruders, high in the air. Their magic is strong, but they lack the fury of the warrior. The revenge you took on them was sweet and cold, and you long for the next encounter.

Your ship's captain has suggested that perhaps it is time to seek an alliance with the people of the lowlands, to work together to send the Atlanteans back whence they came once and for all. The idea of becoming allies with your former prey is as strange as it is abhorrent, but the threat posed by this new enemy might force it upon you...

Atlantean Runaway Slave



You escaped the enslavement of the Atlanteans. That alone is such a miracle that whatever else may befall you in life, you will always consider yourself fortunate.

You learned your magic carefully, quietly. Your master was Vioulous, a thief from a city near Atlantis. The Atlanteans caught him stealing and enslaved him. They carried him hundreds of miles through the air. They bound his magic—trapped it—robbed him of it. But Vioulous could still teach you the ways of magic, the understanding of it, and you learned well.

He knew the ways of silence, of shadows. "It is not a matter of control," he taught you. "It is simply understanding the world. The world is rich in magic. To vanish from sight is no difficult feat. But to understand how to do it, to know that it is possible—that is what is hard."

When Vioulous died, you were able to get past the guards and escape by applying all he had taught you. You walked silently onto an airship, stowed away until the ship touched down again, then ran away swift as a deer for as long as you could.

You hope never to have to deal with the Atlanteans again. You believe that the only way to make sure of that is to become rich. Rich is safe. You have heard tales of a ruined city to the north, Parlainth, said to be filled with treasures from before the time of the Horrors. Adventurers travel there to seek their fortune. Perhaps you could do that too. Perhaps you could meet up with someone, brave the dangers of the city, find a treasure, and finally be rich. And safe. . .

Ork Cavalryman



You earn your keep by selling your sword. Mounted on your enchanted steeds, you and your brother warriors are the terror of any battlefield. Your understanding of magic lets you wield your sword with a blinding speed. You also know how to bend your thoughts so that you and your steed move as one.

Over the years you have been called on to perform many services. Once a dragon hired you to wipe out an army of humans who were threatening him. Another time the dwarven kingdom of Throal paid you to protect its farmlands from Atlantean raids. Then the emerging city-state of Landis bought your services to augment their raids against the city-state of Gorainth.

Life has been good. But you are getting the itch again. You have mastered some magic, but you know how much more is to be learned. Your brothers do not understand the desire. But then, they do not understand magic, how it tempts you with the promise of greater skill and prowess. You think it is time to strike out on your own—for a while. To seek out a teacher who can continue your education.

Though you thirst for this knowledge, you know that sometimes it can be more dangerous than a well-armed enemy. . .

Dwarven Weaponsmith

You are master of metals and magic, and you use your knowledge to create blades of sharpness and strength... that mundane smiths only dream of... But more than this, you know how to link weapon to person, how to make a sword from your forge an extension of he who wields it. Such a blade is more than a sword. It is like a man's arm—it moves instinctively, it moves with the speed of thought.

The struggles with the Atlanteans, the remaining Horrors, and the creatures of the wilderness have kept your skills in demand. That is good, for it keeps your coffers full. But you are running out of the magical elements you need to forge your weapons, and soon you will have to gather more.

A group of adventurers has recently returned to Throal with stories of an ancient keep, still sealed tight against the Horrors. The adventurers pounded on the thick stone doors but received no response. Perhaps the inhabitants still reside within the keep, believing that the Horrors still roam and ravage the earth in great numbers. Or they might all be dead, murdered by Horrors that penetrated the defenses. Either way, you believe it would be worthwhile to gather up a group of adventurers and journey to the fortress. The keep may still be rich in magical supplies. Horrors, too, might be waiting within, but the precious mana elements you need if you wish to continue your work are worth the risk. . .



Elven Elementalist

You are master of water, air, and stone, and it has made you wealthy. Home for you is a large settlement of elves built among the trees of Wyrm Wood, but you return there only to rest. Your calling as an adventurer takes you back and forth across the land and through many adventures.



You have gathered around yourself a small band of warlocks who travel with you to areas any sane person would shun. But the treasures are piled high and the knowledge stored in ancient tomes runs deep. There are many tales of citadels and mountain fortresses that fell during the time of the Horrors' invasion.

Some of the ruins are haunted by creatures of earth—griffons and giant serpents. Others are hiding places for the few Horrors still remaining from the invasion. Insidious creatures who lay in wait for their prey, then taunt and toy with their victims before death.

But you have the understanding of magic with you. You can reshape the walls of ancient shelters or send howling winds down corridors to sweep them clean of creatures. The dangers are real and present, but the lure of ancient weapons, tomes of magic, and elemental treasure draws you ever into the hidden places...

THE MERCHANT'S GIFT

At the center of the clearing burned a great fire bounded by a wide circle of rocks. Forming a second circle around the stones were twelve dwarfs seated solemnly on small logs. The fire lit their ruddy faces and their bushy gray beards, and threw huge shadows of the dwarfs among the dark trees at the edges of the clearing. Curling up from the center of the clearing was a column of smoke that seemed to aspire to reach far overhead, to where pinpoint stars burned brilliantly against the black cloth of night.

"Will they come?" asked Borthun. His voice was deep and smooth, like a heavy bell's thick chimes. He rocked back and forth slightly, making the red firelight slide up and down his golden armaments. He looked at no one when he uttered the question, and it seemed he voiced the concerns of the group as a whole.

"Will *he* come?" asked Gallor. "That's what I want to know." He was younger than the others, and tended toward impatience.

"Aye. He'll come," answered Holrax, and when he spoke the other dwarfs looked to him. "He'll come—if they show. He swore he would, and he keeps his word."

"I never trust humans. . .," began Gallor, stirred from his complacency by Holrax's resolve.

"None of that," said Holrax. The old dwarf gave Gallor a smile, and raised his thick and stubby hand. "We're here for peace. And the peace must begin with us."

"Yes, Captain," answered Gallor as he lowered his gaze. The other dwarfs returned their attention to the fire. The air was cool, and the heat from the flames warmed their faces and hands.

Borthun stood. "Horses," he said plainly. The others rose from their logs, and a few brushed dirt from the leggings of their armor. Then all turned in the direction Borthun looked. Within moments they heard the distinct sound of horses galloping quickly down the road just on the other side of the trees. Gallor placed his hand on the pommel of his sword, though he politely kept it in its scabbard. Holrax noticed this, opened his mouth slightly as if to say something, then chose to remain silent.



Behind trees, floating orbs of torchlight flickered in and out of sight. "Holrax!" someone called. "Holrax of Throal!"

"He is here!" answered Borthun. "And who are you?"

"I am Charus, and I travel with my liege, Kerath of Landis."

"Then welcome," said Borthun, "for you have found safe meeting with my captain."

From the area of the torches came the soft sounds of riders dismounting and alighting on the ground. A few horses brayed, and then the torches came closer.

Soon the first of the humans broke the treeline and entered the clearing, his right hand holding the reigns of his large brown horse, his left a torch. Borthun walked briskly up to the man and offered his hand. "Borthun," he said, smiling as he did so.

"Charus," the man said, and he too broke into a smile. His deeply tanned skin framed a set of very white teeth. "A pleasure to meet you face to face."

"Yes. Our people have spent too much time conducting diplomacy by courier. Come. Join us."

More men, another eight in all, walked their horses out of the trees. They let their mounts go, and the horses gathered together, as if in silent council.

The dwarfs again sat down on the ring of small logs, sitting so that the humans alternated with them in positions around the fire. Holrax remained standing, as did one of the humans. A large man with broad shoulders, he wore sturdy leather armor, over which hung the fur of a griffon. The two leaders stood on either side of the fire and stared at each other for a moment. Then both relaxed their stances, and everyone around the fire relaxed as well.

"Greetings, Kerath, monster killer and hero of Landis."

"Hail, Holrax, master weaponsmith and mas-

ter warrior of Throal."

"I have. . .," Holrax said, his voice trailing off as he rummaged through a leather pouch tied to his belt. He withdrew a ring into which was set a glittering diamond. "A gift for you," he finished.

Kerath looked at the dwarf with a bit of distaste. "You know I cannot accept such a gift under these circumstances."

"Are the people of Landis so fearful of magic?"

The humans around the fire shifted, but made no moves toward their weapons.

"'A wise man respects magic, a fool makes it his friend,'" Kerath said, quoting an old saying. "I am a warlock, and know what can be done with enchanted items that are taken willingly."

Holrax nodded. "Well-spoken. I meant no offense." He put the ring back in his sack.

"It is good we have met," began Kerath, obviously trying to put the previous moment far behind. "It is time our people put our differences aside and worked toward striking down our common oppressor—the Atlanteans."

"Indeed," answered the dwarf, and then he cocked his head slightly to one side. "But if I might ask. . . I am here on the authority of King Varulus, and he has given me voice so I might speak for the kingdom of Throal. But are you not one faction of many within your city?"

Once again the humans shifted. "We are a powerful faction," Kerath said firmly. "And as we move, so move many others in Landis."

"I meant nothing by this," said the dwarf. "It is only that I need to know with whom I am dealing. Now I do. We have been in contact with your city for some time. We had not expected to meet in the darkness of a forest."

"As you have suggested, there are many factions, some of which would sell your people to the Atlanteans. If plans of war are to be made, let them be made here, in privacy."

"You suggest war, then?" the dwarf said, then sat down finally.

The man also took a seat. "I know where the Atlanteans have settled a small valley, far from their outpost." He reached into a pocket cut into his fur and pulled out a map folded into quarters. He spread the map on his knees and said, "They are already expanding into our lands. We must strike now so that they understand we will not allow this."

"Kerath," said one of the humans quietly, and he raised his hand and turned his head as if listening. Everyone around the fire became still. From through the trees and down the road came the sound of metal clanking against metal, of rusted axles scratching against rusted braces, of old horses drawing heavy breaths. A creaky, diseased voice sang.

A girl becomes her mother as she grows older
And nothing worse could ever befall her betrother. . .

"Oh!" shouted the voice, as if in recognition. It coughed two wet coughs. "Hallo! Hallo!" it called. "Is anyone by that fire?"

All the men and all the dwarfs stood up and pulled their swords halfway out of their scabbards. "There are folk here," shouted Holrax, "but our company is complete. There is no place for you, whoever you are."

There followed sounds of more metal clanking about and of horses braying, and then clumsy footsteps on the leafy forest floor.

"I'll kill him and be done with it," said Kerath. But even as the warrior moved for the treeline, Holrax said, "And have someone come out looking for him?"

A man stepped out from the trees. He looked old and worn and tired. His clothing consisted of layers of grayish rags and a broad-brimmed hat that revealed little of the man's face but a bit of wrinkled skin and a pointed nose. A terrible noise rolled up in his throat, and he spit off to one side.

"We told you we have no place for you," said one of Kerath's men.

"No one has a place for a merchant, until they get a chance to see his wares." The man turned slightly, revealing a bag slung over his shoulder. As large as a great pig, it was stuffed with items that made the material bulge in strange ways.

"We have no need to buy anything," said one of the dwarfs.

"How much money could a man make if he sold what people *needed*?" said the newcomer, and then broke into an uncontrolled laugh, which in seconds became a coughing fit. The dwarfs and humans looked about at one another and then back at the man. "No, listen," he said when he had composed himself, "I have what you want."

His patience exhausted, Kerath drew out his blade and took two steps forward. "Enough, beggar! All we want is silence!"

The man laughed again. "A... b .. b... beggar! I told you, sir—I am a merchant." Here he coughed once more and swung his bag around and set it upon the ground. "These are my wares."

Holrax quickly circled around the fire and came up beside Kerath. In a hushed tone he said, "Let us look, find nothing of interest, and send him on his way."

"I still think we should simply kill him," said Kerath in a quiet but steely voice.

"Kill a man for doing his job? That sounds like Atlantean logic."

Kerath shot the dwarf a sharp look and then said, "Very well."

The merchant had already opened the bag and started to rummage about inside it. Holrax walked up to the merchant and said, "Very well, friend merchant, we will examine your wares, and when we are done, whether we have purchased anything or not, you will leave us to our business. Agreed?"

The merchant looked up, smiling a nearly toothless grin. "Agreed. But I think you'll find at least something to draw your interest."

The dwarf looked back at Kerath, his eyes pleading with the man to come over and play along. With a heavy sigh the warrior strode up to the merchandise.

The light flickered over the merchant's face as he said, "Please, examine." He pushed the lip of the bag out for Holrax. The dwarf plunged in both of his hands. Something golden caught the light in his right hand, but it was only to the small figurine of a harlequin in his left hand that he paid any attention. Absently he passed the object in his right hand up to Kerath.

Kerath took it and with little interest turned it to the light to get a better view. His eyes, trained in the arts of magic, saw small sparks of magical energy jump from his flesh to a metal jar, and then back again.

His hand tightened around the object, and he turned away from the fire so no one else could see it. In his hand he held an orchilum jar. It was cylindrical in shape, with a cap latched with metal clamps. The magical metal was rare enough, but to have it forged into the shape of a container.... The jar could be used to store other mana elements and to hide magical devices from other warlocks.

It was worth the price of 400 soldiers at least.

He looked the merchant up and down. He was a vagabond, nothing more. He collected scraps and

bits of nonsense and sold them to fools more foolish than he. He might not know the true value of this jar.

Kerath's attention returned to the situation at hand just in time to hear the dwarf say, "How much for the trickster?" The dwarf was still gazing down at the figurine of the clown, admiring it.

Kerath dropped the jar into the bag and asked, "How much for the lot? The whole bag? The clown, too, if he really wants it."

"The whole bag?" asked Holrax, his eyebrows raised in surprise.

"The whole bag!" exclaimed the merchant triumphantly.

"The whole bag. Let's get this over with, shall we?"

"Well, here's the thing of it, sir. The rest of the materials in this bag, they're junk, you see. But the clown, the clown, in particular, is of exceptional value. Look at the detail of his little carved bell...."

"Yes, yes," snapped Kerath impatiently. "How much?"

"Ah, sir. 'How much?' you ask."

"Yes," the man repeated, lolling his head from one side to the other, "How much."

The merchant opened his mouth to speak, then shut his jaw tight, placing his hand against the stubble on his chin. "Good question. Hmmm. Twenty-five gold."

"Twenty-five gold?" exclaimed Holrax.

"Twenty-five gold!" snarled the merchant.

"Twenty-five gold it is," said the man, and he pulled a purse out from his furs.

"No, no," the dwarf interjected. "Friend, I cannot allow you to buy me such an expensive present."

"No trouble," said the man, with a smile that was obviously forced.

"No, I insist," and Holrax fished out his own coin purse.

"No. I wish to make the purchase," said the man.

"As do I. I want the clown, and I'll buy the lot. The sack of garbage I'll turn over to you for free."

Kerath was about to protest, when he took in the meaning of the dwarf's words. "Ah," he said, widening his hands magnanimously. "Very well. If you insist."

The dwarf counted out the gold coins and the merchant pocketed them hungrily. The dwarf took the clown in one hand and the top of the sack in the other. "Well, I'll just take a look to see if there's anything I want . . ." He reached his hand into the bag, and Kerath stepped forward to stop him from progressing. At just that moment the merchant fell over backward with a loud cry. Kerath turned his head for just an instant. When he saw the merchant had merely tripped, he turned his attention back to the dwarf and then snatched the bag up. His face was dark and angry. But when his hand closed tightly around the sack he leaned forward toward the dwarf, smiled, and said, "Why don't we continue?"

With a startled look the dwarf said, "Very well." He turned to the merchant, who was getting up and brushing dirt off himself, and said, "Leave us now, friend. We have made our purchase."

The merchant bowed low, and walked with a bit of a limp toward the trees.

When he had gone, and they heard his cart roll away, Holrax said, "You were saying?" Everyone gathered around the fire once more and took their places on the logs.

"Yes," said the warrior, a smug smile upon his face. He flattened out his map once more. "I was saying that I am presenting to you a plan, an assault

upon the Atlanteans, that will lead your people into the valley. There, the Atlanteans will attack you from the front, and my soldiers will close on you from the rear. . . ."

He stopped, his eyes large with surprise. He raised his fingers to his throat and touched it, as if he might find something the matter.

"I. . .," he stuttered.

"Let me ask you this: how many of your men here knew of this treachery?"

"All of us, of course," said Kerath, almost immediately. He stood, stumbling a bit. He stared at the dwarf. "You did this."

"You did it. You took the sack from me. There was an enchanted gem in the orchilum jar you so deeply coveted. Enchanted to make the owner tell the truth. I released it from the jar before you took the sack."

Kerath shouted, "Kill them!" But his men, startled by the events transpiring before them, were caught off guard by the dwarfs. Ready and waiting, each dwarf pulled out his sword and struck powerful blows to the human who sat on his right. The four dwarfs who had no assigned partners leaped up and moved in for killing strokes against those who put up resistance. The battle moved quickly, and was over in a matter of seconds. The humans lay sprawled on the ground. The blood gleamed brightly on the dwarven swords.

Holrax and Kerath stared at each other across the flames, seemingly oblivious to the quick deaths around them. "I will kill you," the man said, and drew a long silver blade from his scabbard. Blue sparks ran up and down its length.

"I think not," the dwarf said plainly.

Kerath heard the sound behind him just a fraction of a second too late. His face betrayed a moment of surprise, and then he fell forward and collapsed into a heap, two daggers protruding from his back.

The merchant stood behind his corpse. He passed his hands over his face, and with a crackle of violet energy, his visage changed in appearance to that of a young man. He raised an eyebrow as he looked at the dwarf. "Did you like the clown?"

A slow smile spread over the dwarf's face. "I thought it a bit obvious."

"A shame their offer proved to be false."

The dwarf looked around at the dead men, a sadness filling his tired eyes. "Aye. But better to find out now."

"True. Well, I'm off. . . ."

"Ah," said the dwarf, holding out his hand. "The gold pieces? You were paid in advance."

"Oh, yes," said the revealed warlock, a coy smile on his face. "I nearly forgot."

"Warlocks never forget," said the dwarf as the man placed the gold pieces on his upturned palm.

The warlock glanced down at Kerath's body. He seemed to be wondering if such a fate also waited for him. "When we get greedy, we do."





SHIP OF HORRORS

It is hard to apply a simple classification to the Horrors. Some of the creatures simply ate anything in sight: trees, grass, animals. Some preferred the taste of intelligent beings, and hunted down members of sentient races that did not seek shelter within massive fortresses.

Still others pursued the most difficult prey: the people living in the shelters. These Horrors spent years looking for chinks in the fortress defenses. They attacked the inhabitants through mind control and spirit possession. Once inside they went on rampages, killing everyone they could. The inhabitants went mad with panic, for they knew that they could not escape. Whether they stayed within their walls or opened their doors to flee, they were doomed.

I have little love for the Atlanteans, but I am grateful to them because of their efforts to prevent the Horrors from ever again breaking through to the earth plane in such numbers.

—Perris, Elven Warlock

The trolls pulled the ropes hand over hand, bringing the ship to a higher altitude to catch better winds. The rushing air tossed their braided beards and rustled their thick furs. Barkadamus, the lone human on the vessel, gripped the railing of the ship's prow as the ship keeled to the starboard. He drew in a sharp breath. Above him the bottoms of the clouds seemed no farther than the ceiling of a castle hall. The cold air stung his throat and nostrils, but he didn't mind. There was no more wonderful way to travel than by air. A cheerful and excited smile dominated his young features.

Over the edge of the ship the leaves of Wyrm Wood shivered in a powerful wind, and the forest looked like a giant green lake. Far ahead stretched the broken city of Parlainth. The ruins looked like the handiwork of children: a miniature built of small stones, destroyed after a day's play. Having heard much of the city and the treasures it held, Barkadamus looked forward to reaching it.

A shadow passed over to the railing to his left, and he turned to find Vorg standing by his side. The troll smiled down at his human friend. His face was clean-shaven and his vowels long, marking him as a troll from the lowlands. "There is nothing like it—viewing the world from above. Perspective."

"Aye," joined Barkadamus. He wanted to say more, but as usual words failed him. How could he express the freedom he felt so near the clouds? He'd grown up in the confines of Kaer Borstrom. The sealed mountain retreat had protected his clan against the Horrors for centuries, its thick stone walls shutting out all but the most insidious of the creatures. It had been his home, all he had known. The elves had found them decades after the end of the invasion by the creatures. It took days of talks before his people finally believed the elves. When they at last opened the doors, the sunlight beckoned to Barkadamus. Many of his kin stayed in the stone corridors, but he knew his path lay out in the world.

"Atlantean barge off to starboard!" came a cry from the crow's nest. Barkadamus looked up the mast at the Viking troll. The lookout's eyes blazed with silver light, and he held an arm outstretched. Barkadamus followed the direction of the arm and spotted a pinpoint of darkness floating off in the distance. A handful of trolls gathered along the starboard rail and peered off at the distant ship. Anticipation filled their eyes.

"It appears to be without escort," said Vorg, half to himself.

"Do you think we'll attack it?" Barkadamus asked.

Vorg looked up and down the ranks of Vikings pressed against the ship's railing. "I don't think they'll give up the opportunity to attack it."

"Bring her around!" shouted the captain. His deep voice carried over the winds and washed over the rails of the ships. Around the ship trolls set about tacking toward the barge. Other trolls pulled their weapons from their belts and stared hungrily out toward the Atlantean vessel. Barkadamus saw that the other two ships, floating several hundred yards off either side, mirrored the movements.

Barkadamus thought back to the memories of his encounters with Atlanteans, all in trading camps on solid ground. He envied their wealth, their astounding abilities of magic. He wondered what Atlantis, their island city and the heart of their empire, was like. He had never told Vorg, but he often dreamed of traveling to it. "Could it be a trick?"

"Perhaps. But the Atlanteans don't usually depend on craftiness. Their arrogance precludes it. It is strange, though. . . ."

Barkadamus scanned the sky. He wondered if the ship had drifted away from the other mining vessels, but he didn't see any other ships. Or had the slaves perhaps wrested control of the ship and were now fleeing for their freedom? His questions fell away as he pictured the treasures waiting for him in the ruins of Parlainth: precious metals, stacks of lost magical tomes. "The attack will delay us."

"From what?"

"From reaching the city. The dungeons, the treasure." Images of deep tunnels brimming with gold and of ancient scrolls stuffed with the lore of forgotten schools of magic filled his head.

Vorg laughed. "That is your problem, my little friend. You focus too much on the plans. Adventures—the best adventures—are often those you stumble across. Most delays are fascinating, if looked at properly."

Barkadamus looked back toward the barge. The troll ships had moved quickly, and he could see the barge in detail. It was the size of several giant buildings in one. Although most Atlantean craftsmanship showed grace and beauty, the mining barges reflected the callousness of the Atlanteans toward their workers. Ash from mana bursts used for the mining caked and dirtied the vessel, and not a shred of ornamentation decorated the ship.

The captain walked up to them. He eyed Barkadamus with a bit of contempt, which made Barkadamus relish the prospect of the fight, just so he could prove himself to the troll captain and his crew. He saw in the captain's eyes the displeasure at being bound to carry him and Vorg. An old blood tie with all trolls. He would not mind seeing them dead. Superstition ran wild on Viking vessels, and carrying lowlanders was believed to bring trouble. "By agreement. . .," the captain began.

"Yes, yes," Vorg said absently. "We'll board her with you. But something is wrong."

The captain shrugged and gave a toothy smile. "Whatever. She is ours." He turned and raised his hands and shouted, "She is ours!" A cry went up along the length of the deck as the trolls repeated their captain's words. They raised their weapons high and shook them wildly. The captain turned back to Vorg and Barkadamus, his face full of pride for the fury his men possessed. "You'll go in the second group," he said looking down at Barkadamus. "We wouldn't want to get you killed

too quickly." He walked away laughing.

"There's something wrong," Vorg said again, his voice full of resignation. He, too, drew his weapon, a sword made of crystal that caught the sun's light and refracted it into a rainbow halo. The crystal enhanced Vorg's blows, much as the crystal built into the shields and armor of the Vikings protected them from magical attacks.

Barkadamus drew out the mace he'd taken from a dead Atlantean only a few weeks earlier. He moved his hands along the handle, feeling the weight, still fascinated with the device. No chain connected the spiked ball to the stick. The heavy ball simply floated a foot and a half from the end of the stick, but the lack of a chain made the weapon much harder to parry. He had learned much as an apprentice within the walls of Kaer Borstrom, but the revealed world held one new surprise after another.

"Ready for boarding!" bellowed the captain, and the shout pulled the boy from his reverie. Trolls tossed ropes with sturdy iron hooks through the air to catch the railings of the barge. Hand over hand they pulled the ropes and brought their ships in alongside the dark Atlantean vessel.

Even as the ship approached, everyone fell silent. On the deck of the barge lay the remains of the slaves, their muscles torn, their blood spilled across the boards. Barkadamus scanned the deck. None of the corpses wore Atlantean-style robes. Where were the ship's masters?

"Board!" the captain shouted gruffly. Crew members from all three ships did so, but with obvious trepidation, as if they too had become aware that the situation contained something dark. And whenever people encountered such an aura of darkness, they immediately imagined that the Horrors were involved. The crewmen moved slowly, their weapons held out before them, defensively. Barkadamus had never before seen Vikings behave in such a manner.

"Something's wrong," Barkadamus said softly to Vorg.

Vorg laughed lightly and said, "Very good. You're learning."

The trolls that had boarded the barge stood motionless. At their feet were the bodies of elves from the Gliasian, dwarfs from the Kingdom of Throal, and humans from the countless settlements the three nearby Kaer had spawned.

Whatever had killed these slaves must have relished perverse destruction; great pains had been taken to lay the insides of the corpses bare. The Horrors. There was no doubt. And more than likely, one or more of them waited in the ship.

Barkadamus saw the captain hesitate, obviously reluctant to send his men down into the lower decks. Then the troll's gaze fell upon Vorg and Barkadamus, and his toothy smile returned. "You go. I want to know if what did this is still on the barge. Go find out." Barkadamus felt his shoulders tighten. He had no choice but to obey.

"Leave the boy," said Vorg. "I'll go alone."

A flush of anger cut through Barkadamus' cheeks, and he glared up at his companion. Through clenched teeth he said, "Don't you dare protect me."

Vorg stared down at him, and Barkadamus saw him weigh his words. With a grim expression he said, "Very well." The captain took a step back from the railing and gestured toward the barge.

Barkadamus and Vorg crossed the deck, then heaved themselves over the edge of the Viking ship. For just a moment, in mid-air, Barkadamus looked down and saw the ground through the small gap between the two ships. A crazed fear grabbed him,

and he thought he might somehow fall to his death. Then his feet slammed into the wooden deck, and he felt safe.

He caught his balance and glanced quickly about. The Vikings looked away from him, obviously ashamed that he would adventure out before them. On the deck lay an elf's corpse, naked, his long, angular body cut open with delicate precision. Barkadamus had never seen such cuts produced by local weapons.

An image flashed in his mind—his childhood, long before the doors were opened, his mother possessed by one of the creatures, coming at him with a knife. . .

"Barkadamus," Vorg said in a soft and low voice, "are you certain you want to go?"

"They might be gone," he answered. "Everyone is dead. They probably are gone."

"That doesn't answer my question."

Barkadamus looked up into the craggy face. "I don't want to go. But I do. How is that for an answer?"

"Healthy. Ready?"

"Yes."

They'd known each other for several months now, and worked together without words. Vorg walked toward a door leading to the decks below, and Barkadamus followed a footstep behind. As Vorg walked he sheathed his sword and passed his hand through the air in a simple ritual. Barkadamus watched his friend, and knew that the ease with which he made the gesture had taken years of practice. A blur of blue light formed around Vorg's hands, and then vanished. As he walked, his footsteps changed from heavy thuds, to quiet footfalls, to silence. But in no way did Vorg change the manner of his walk. It was just that the air would no longer carry his sound.

Vorg leaned down and touched the handle of the door, peered at it, and sniffed. He looked back to Barkadamus, nodded, turned his head once more to the door and pushed the latch. The door creaked open, revealing only darkness. Although Vorg could see living bodies in the darkness, he knew that Horrors often gave off no heat. He passed his hands before his eyes. A flash appeared in his pupils for a moment, then dimmed. He took another look inside, then entered.

Barkadamus followed. Within the corridor was the smell of oil and sweat. Dry ash floated in the air, and it settled in Barkadamus' mouth. He tried to wipe the taste off against his teeth, but it remained.

Fine cracks in the walls admitted thin splinters of golden light that cut veils of illumination across the dark corridor. As Vorg walked down the hall, he passed into the light, and then out of it, over and over again. As he moved he looked through one cabin door after another. Nothing caught his interest, and he continued on.

When he reached a turn in the hallway eight yards away, he signaled left, and waved his hand for Barkadamus to follow. Then he disappeared from sight.

Barkadamus started down the corridor. A sticky substance held the soles of his boots in a light grip as he tried to move. There was not enough light to satisfy his curiosity about what was on the floor, and part of him was glad.

He reached the end of the corridor and turned the corner.

Before him, ten feet away, stood Vorg, quite dead.

A terror raced up his spinal cord and gripped his thoughts, making him draw in his breath sharply. It was not just the death of his friend. There was the matter of the silence. As he looked at the troll, now

held upright by four spears—two in the chest, two in the back, each propped against the floor—Barkadamus wondered where the scream had gone. Shouldn't there have been a scream? Shouldn't there have been a scuffle, a scratching, the sounds of *something* to mark the passing of Vorg's life?



"I see you appreciate my silent approach," came a voice from behind him. "I'm very fond of it. More of a surprise that way."

Barkadamus turned around slowly, afraid of what he might find. He saw nothing. As he began to back up carefully, he bumped accidentally into Vorg's body. Starting violently in surprise, he dropped his mace and slipped on Vorg's blood. Meanwhile his weapon rolled out of sight and into a patch of darkness. Instinctively he looked up at the troll's head. His heart skipped a beat as the head moved, as if being pushed, and looked down at him. It smiled, but the grin was not Vorg's.

The image of his mother returned, and his chest became hard and stiff against the howl rising in his lungs. He wanted to move, to run back to the deck and scream for help and tell the trolls to attack—or leave—something—but he found himself transfixed as he watched Vorg's body rip the spears out of its chest and back. The face betrayed intense agony as the muscles tore and the blood flowed, but then it laughed a mindless laugh.

A scream cut its way loose from the boy's throat and he jumped back, slamming himself against a wall. In a panicked reflex he focused on his magic—felt the threads of his muscles that kept him whole, saw for a brief moment an image of himself not as he was born, but as he needed to be in that moment.

Without conscious thought he willed a change upon himself. His heart beat faster, his lungs pumped air more quickly. Barkadamus saw the thing with Vorg's body swing Vorg's hand toward him, and he leaped out of the way. Tucking his body into a ball, he rolled down the corridor

only to come smashing into black boots as dark as a lake on a starless night. Looking up he saw a terrible thing, a man with worn red skin. Wrinkled and ancient, the skin sagged off his bones as if he'd worn it for far too long. Tufts of long black hair hung from his diseased scalp. He smiled down at Barkadamus. The man worn a black cloak that swirled around his body. The boy saw it was lined with rows of silver blades—each with edges as fine as hairs.

"Well. Here we are," the thing said. A terribly worn red hand grabbed a blade and ripped it out of the material.

Barkadamus was about to jump again, when large, rough hands grabbed the back of his shoulder and raised him into the air. The red man brought the fingers of his free hand up to the collar of Barkadamus' hard leather armor and gripped it tightly. The man's fingers felt cold.

Barkadamus began kicking wildly, instinctively. He also began to recite the chants his mother had taught to him, each designed to assuage his fears, to make him less of a delicacy for the Horrors. The words tumbled out of him, a babble of syllables, high-pitched and growing toward a long, solid scream.

Suddenly the red man turned his head to look down the corridor, and Barkadamus stilled his voice. He heard the clatter of footsteps from the corridor by which he and Vorg had entered. The Vikings were coming, most likely shamed into action.

The red man made a hissing noise, and the thing in Vorg's body walked down the hall to meet the Vikings.

The red man still held Barkadamus by the collar, and seemed to have no trouble keeping him raised with one arm. He shifted his position slightly, and set the boy's back to the wall, then pushed his hand against the boy's neck.

"You are very afraid, aren't you?"

Barkadamus shook his head. "They want the fear," his mother had told him. "Don't let them have it."

"What pretty scars you have," the red man said, and he touched his silver blade lightly against the ritual wounds the people of his clan made.

"We follow the rituals," his mother had explained, "so we know who is still in control of himself."

Down the corridor came the sounds of battle. He heard battle cries, and trolls screaming. Some would get through. Just a few. That's all he needed. Just a bit of help.

"Have we met before?" the red man asked.

"No," Barkadamus said. He had seen the creature that had taken his mother. This thing wasn't it.

"Pity." The red man took the blade and nipped a bit of Barkadamus' cheek. The boy felt his warm blood swell up and begin trickling down his flesh. "Did you see what I did to the slaves outside?"

Barkadamus nodded. He knew the thing wanted him to be afraid, and he tried to divert his thoughts. What could he do? He might well be dead by the time the raiders arrived. If they arrived.

"Would you like to see what I did to their masters?"

He might be able to grab one of the blades—steal it right off the red man's cloak. Maybe. Barkadamus tried to gauge the distance. He would only have one chance, and it would have to work. If he missed, his plan would be exposed, and he would have no advantage.

The sounds of battle stopped, and the red man looked away.

He seemed close enough.

The red man turned his head back and caught the direction of the boy's gaze. "Do you want one of my blades?"

An anger built up within Barkadamus. He'd heard that not all of the Horrors were such coy game-players, but this one was as arrogant as the Atlanteans. "Yes," he said. "Yes, I want one of your blades."

"Then here—," and the red man pulled his hand back and swung the blade he held toward Barkadamus' face. The boy, his body alive with magic, ducked, doubling over and reaching his hand out for the thing's cloak. Behind him he heard the blade slam into the wooden wall.

Barkadamus grabbed at the thing's cloak, but his fingertips remained a few inches too far away. He pushed his feet against the wall and tried to force himself forward, but the thing kept him back.

"No, not that," said the red man.

Yes! thought Barkadamus, and with his free hand he spun off a gesture and felt his limbs grow in strength. He slammed his legs against the wall and knocked the red man back. The two of them collapsed to the floor, and with frantic fingers Barkadamus grabbed at the blades and ripped two from the cloak's lining.

With no time for errors he altered himself again, this time shouting a word of great power. The syllable escaped from him as a scream and strained his throat and tore at his nerves. In an instant he saw the red man clearly, saw every detail of the man's exposed flesh, every element of his muscles, skin, and bone. With the clarity of sunlight he saw exactly where the blades should be planted—knew where on the creature's neck they would do the most damage—and slammed them into the pale red skin.

The thing's eyes widened and his mouth formed a precise O as he screamed. Streams of deep red blood rushed from the wounds and covered the boy's hands.

Without waiting to see the results of his handiwork, Barkadamus struggled to his feet and rushed down the corridor. He turned the corner just in time to bump into Vorg's animated corpse. Behind the troll's body lay a dozen dead Vikings.

Barkadamus was out of screams now, his body buzzing with spells and adrenaline. He glanced around for his mace, but could not find it. He turned and grabbed one of the spears that had pierced Vorg's body from the floor. He swung it around and slammed the tip into the body, piercing Vorg's armor. Vorg's face looked down, and flashed a bit of concern. But when he realized the body had not failed him, the creature ripped the spear out of its chest, and looked back to Barkadamus and smiled.

A wave of despair washed over Barkadamus. He wanted no more than to lie down and surrender. But seeing the mockery of his friend, now dead and possessed by one of the Horrors, infused him with a sense of purpose. He would kill them.

His resolve gathered just as he heard the labored breathing of the red man coming closer. He glanced back and saw the thing walking down the corridor, a blood-soaked blade in each hand. The wounds on either side of his neck puckered in and out like gills.

Barkadamus rolled out of the way just as Vorg's arms slammed down toward him. He had no plan, but knew distance was required immediately. Without a glance back he raced down the remaining corridor, further into the ship, searching for a place of safety and a means to destroy the creatures.

He came upon several doors, but dared not enter, lest he trap himself in a room without means

of escape. Behind him the things followed. The sound of the red man's moist breathing echoed in his ears.

Finally he found a doorway that led to a lower deck. Flinging the door open Barkadamus saw that the stairs tumbled down into an unfathomable darkness. From under his shirt he drew out a piece of amber tied to a chain around his neck. Within the amber flickered a small flame. Barkadamus passed his hands over the stone, and the intensity of the flame's light grew, revealing rough stairs carved out of hard, splintered wood. The walls and ceiling were blackened from torches. Old dried blood covered the walls.

Barkadamus leaped down the stairs three at a time. When he reached the next landing, he opened the door and raced down a hallway until he found another set of stairs that led deeper into the ship.



This course continued uninterrupted, with the creatures following close behind, for three flights, until Barkadamus found the remains of the Atlanteans. Their flesh hung tacked to the walls like trophies of a hunt. Large glass jars lined the walls, each holding one type of organ: one jar of eyes, one jar of stomachs. . .

Barkadamus reeled back, stunned. Death affords compassion for hated enemies, and for a moment Barkadamus reflected upon the fate of the Atlanteans. Just that morning they had set out to mine the air, using their mana bursts to tear rifts into the astral plane. . .

The mana bursts! The idea seized the boy's imagination, and for a moment he felt a bit of hope in his hopeless situation. If he could find them, he might be able to use them to destroy the barge—and the

creatures.

The clatter of footsteps echoed down the stair-well.

He ran. He didn't know where the mana bursts would be, but he had the start of a plan.

As he passed the doors along the corridor, he glanced quickly through the open ones: slave quarters, crammed with bunks buttressed up against one another; dank food stores full of fetid supplies; the body of a man, untouched by the Horrors, his skin pale and slightly puffed, the skin on his back torn to shreds by whips.

Barkadamus glanced back. In the dimness of his amber light he saw two figures running toward him. Suddenly Vorg's body collapsed to the ground. The red man continued on. Barkadamus was confused, but continued down the hall. Then the right hand of the corpse he'd found, now quite animated, reached out and grabbed his ankle.

"No!" Barkadamus shouted. He reached down and grabbed the wrist and let the magic he'd focused for his strength surge through his hand. With a simple movement he twisted the body's arm up and snapped the wrist. The man gave out a horrible cry as he released the grip on the boy's ankle.

Finally Barkadamus came to a door made of three long pieces of red wood. At the door's center rested a carved symbol: a circle with three parallel lines passing through it. Red powder lined the cuts of the symbol. Barkadamus' people had used such symbols to ward off the Horrors in the Kaer, but he did not know what might be the purpose of this particular ward. He could guess, though, that such a ward would probably be used to protect the ship's valuable magical supplies.

He put his hand near the door's handle, but thought better of it. Vorg had always handled the tricks and traps people put on doors to guard their valuables. Barkadamus knew he didn't know where to begin.

With the thought of his friend he glanced back and saw the animated corpse of the man rushing toward him, the ruined arm dangling uselessly by his side, the other outstretched. It occurred to Barkadamus he had one easy way of finding out what the door did to someone who touched it.

As the corpse reached a distance of a few feet, Barkadamus leaped forward and turned himself to his side so he rolled lengthwise to the ground and into the legs of the corpse. The animated body stumbled forward and fell into the door.

A terrible scream filled the corridor, and Barkadamus turned to find the body slumped against the door, its flesh charred black, its bones exposed. He glanced up and saw that the the ward, too, was blackened.

"Hello, boy. You are quite a troublemaker, aren't you," said the red man, now a few feet away. Barkadamus saw only a flash of silver out of the corner of his eye as he turned and fumbled for the door's handle. His finger caught the latch, and as he pushed the door open, he felt an elegant pain slide down the skin of his back; somehow the blade had cut through his armor and pierced his flesh in one clean stroke.

He fell into the room and bit his lips against the pain. Once inside he turned and shut the door, leaning heavily against it. Every movement caused him pain. He felt the stickiness of his blood as his flesh pressed now and then against his armor.

Looking about, he saw resting against the wall a thick bar of wood designed to fit into metal slots on either side of the door.

Barkadamus grabbed the board just as the red man slammed against the door. The boy tried to

slide the bar down into the metal braces, and the two of them groaned as they pushed against each other's might. That contest lasted for what seemed like hours to Barkadamus. The pain in his back continuously drew his attention and he thought he might pass out from the wound. "I'll make a deal with you," gasped the red man as he continued to push against the door. "Surrender, and I'll be easy on you. I'll let you live for years."

Barkadamus knew something of the deals people of his clan had made to save their own lives. Had such an offer been made to his mother? Had she accepted?

A fury grew within him and leaped out through his arms. He slammed the door shut and slid the bar into the slots. The red man howled and beat the door furiously. Barkadamus stepped back, breathing heavily. He wanted nothing more than to soothe the itching that had begun to grow in intensity.

Before him the door creaked under the blows of the creature. A new urgency filled him. As he looked all around him, Barkadamus saw that he had, indeed, found the magical supply room. In the light from his charm he saw large jars made from gold metal lining the walls. It took him a moment to recognize the metal as orichalcum, the pinnacle of the magic elements. Barkadamus had never seen so much of the metal in one place.

He stepped closer and saw that the jars were marked with symbols. He had never seen the marks before, but each one reminded him of the magic symbols used in his Kaer. His gaze came to rest on five jars marked, as far as he could tell, as "Air Fires," and he assumed these to be the mana bursts used to rip open small holes in the astral plane.

The door began to bulge under the blows of the red man. Barkadamus looked around the room again and saw the outline of a door formed by thin cracks of sunlight. He rushed to it, then dropped the bolt. A loading plank fell open. The green grasses of the world unfurled beneath him. Wild wind rushed up into his face, and he wanted to cry with pleasure for the freshness it offered. The sunlight warmed his skin, and only then did he realize how oppressive, how unearthly the darkness behind him had been.

He braced himself against the door frame and scanned the sky. At first he could not see the ships of the air raiders, but then he shifted and spotted them sailing away, still only a few hundred yards off.

"Captain Kraeg!" he shouted. "Captain Kraeg! Hold!"

The lookout of the flagship turned toward the barge, saw Barkadamus, saw the glint of silver in his enchanted eyes. He waited a moment, letting the troll get a good look at him, and then returned to the jars. They would either think it a trap or not. They would either come back for him and the ship's treasure, or not. Either way, he would send the red man to a fiery grave.

He pulled the stoppers out of the five "Air Fire" jars. An orange substance floated into the air, invisible to all but those trained in the arts. It moved as if alive, extending thin tentacles that curled through the room's air. Each jar's Air Fire passed through the room, meeting and entwining itself with the contents of the other jars.

Barkadamus knew the Air Fire would need a magic-based trigger, and he removed the chain from around his neck. He extended his hand carefully toward a tendril of the Air Fire and gripped it lightly between his fingers to pull it toward him. He wound the bit of Air Fire around his amber stone, and tied it securely.

If the raiders weren't coming back, the matter

was simple. He'd crush the stone, and with luck, the entire hold would go up in a massive conflagration. If they were coming back, he'd need to make a trigger of some kind, so he could get off the barge and reach the safety of the raiding ship.

He looked back out the loading door. The full golden sails were approaching! If he could build a trigger, he could escape.

The bolt over the door split partway. Another few slams by the red man and it would crack in half and fall to the floor.

Barkadamus carried the amber stone to the doorway and quickly placed it between the wooden bolt and the metal hook that held it in place. He wound the chain several times around the metal to keep it firm and then rushed for the cargo door.

A terrifying sight awaited him. The Viking ship waited below, and a dozen trolls held bows in their hands, each with a knocked arrow, each arrow pointed directly at Barkadamus. The faces of the trolls were grim, and the boy had no doubt they thought him possessed and at that moment he would die.

Suddenly the door behind him splintered open and a flare of bloody red light grew out of the astral plane. The blast pushed Barkadamus out the doorway and into the air. Even as he tumbled wildly through space three more explosions rocked the barge, and he felt an intense heat bathe his skin.

The golden sail grew larger and filled his vision until he slammed full into it. He bounced off and tumbled down. Grabbing for a rope that led to the top of the mast, his fingers missed it, and he continued to fall. He passed three more ropes, each of which he almost caught, but none did more than burn his fingers as it slid from his grasp.

Barkadamus slammed finally into the railing and gave out a terrible exhalation as several ribs caved in under the impact. It seemed that he should die now, for never had he known such pain. Before he had a chance to draw in a full breath, he lost his balance and fell off the edge of the ship.

For an instant, he saw only a wash of green, then felt a hand catch him by the back of the neck and drag him up onto the ship. His rescuer threw him onto the deck, and a half-dozen furious trolls peered down at him, their massive mouths baring large teeth, the light of the setting sun turning their flesh a cold green.

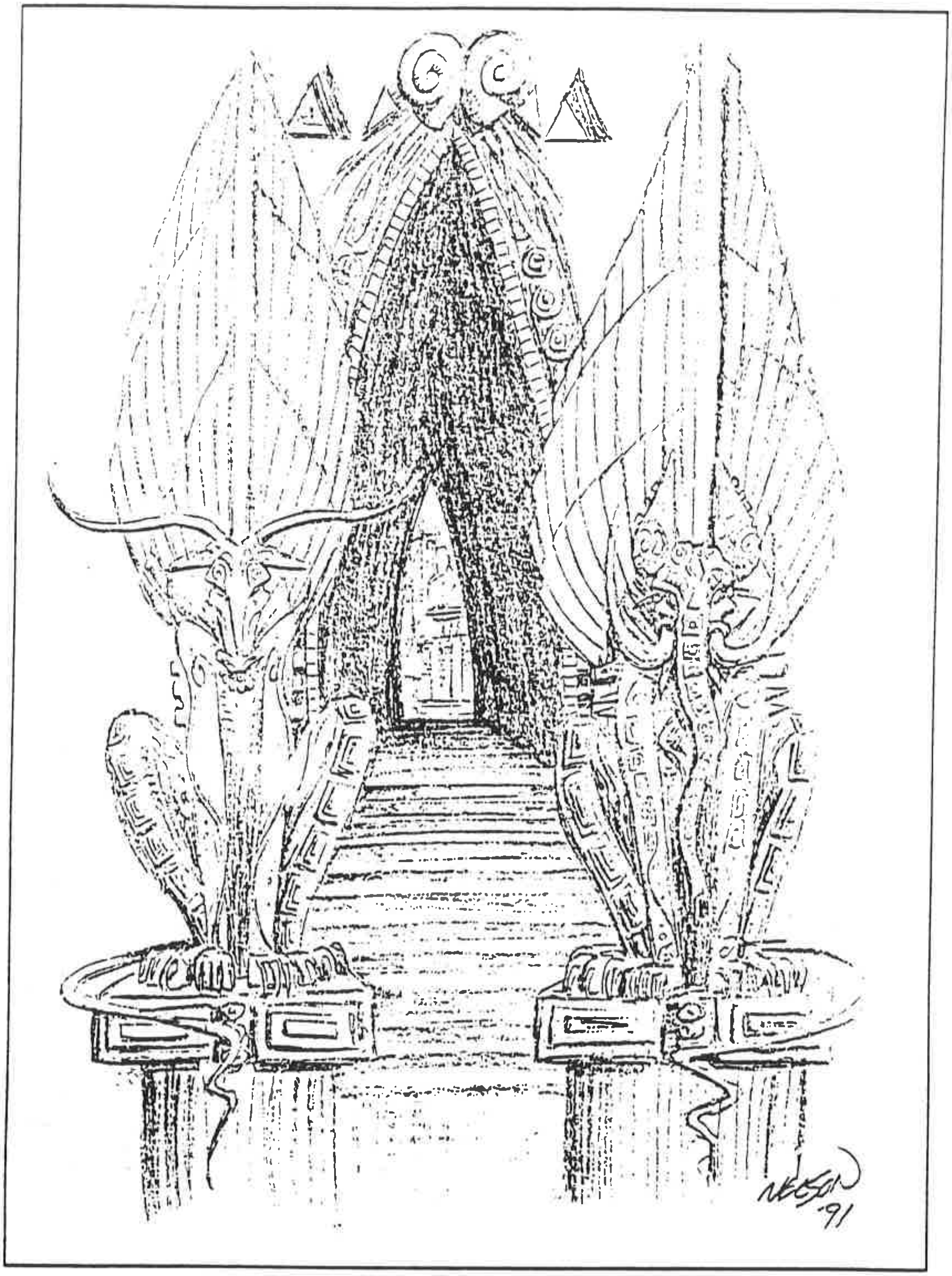
"Who are you?" one of them demanded.

"Bar. . .," he wheezed in reply. "I am Barkadamus. The others are dead. The Horrors are dead."

The captain arrived and pushed his crew aside. He knelt beside Barkadamus and looked into the boy's face. The troll's eyes rolled back in their sockets as he drew upon the arts.

Barkadamus gasped in agony, hoping desperately that the captain was very competent and could produce a conclusive sight. After a moment of complete stillness, the captain's eyes returned to normal and the troll stood. The gathered crew members all looked at him expectantly. "It is the boy. Just the boy." And then he looked down at Barkadamus with a proud smile and said, "And more than that. Take him below and tend to him."

Four sets of troll hands carefully lifted him up. He saw the barge in the distance, all aflame, falling quickly. Chunks of the ship's hull had blown off, and soon there would be little left. The Horrors were dead. But this gave him no cheer, for so was his friend. Barkadamus felt the ship rock under him, and he wondered if there would ever be any place on earth where his memories would be free of death.


NELSON
'91

Yes. Of course. There are adventures to be had. Risks to be taken. By those who can afford to.

But here, on the throne of Throal, things are a bit different. I am the ruler of the only force that can truly resist the incursions of the Atlanteans into Barsaive. I have no time for creeping about in dark tunnels and mass graves. The politics of the world are too complicated. I must keep peace between the lowland dwarfs and the ork cavalry I have hired to protect them. I must negotiate with the troll Vikings to keep their attention turned solely toward the Atlanteans. I must find a means to gather the human citadels into an alliance, rather than have them fighting among themselves.

Yes, go on your quests, your adventures. But when you come back, carry with you something I can *use*.

—King Varulus of Throal

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novel	$4.99	January
Paranormal Animals of Europe		
sourcebook	18.00	March
Shadowrun #10 (Night's Pawn)		
novel	4.99	March
Dark Angel		
adventure	8.00	Early April
Tir Tairngire		
elven sourcebook	18.00	May
A Killing Glare		
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Shadowrun #11 (Striper Assassin)		
novel	4.99	May
Sprawl Maps		
map package for SR & DMZ	$TBA	Late July
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adventure	8.00	October